

The Lord of the Funk  
Part 1: The Fellowship of the Funk

It was May of '92 at Dover AFB, DE. Spring was stalling out like a bad analogy and we were puzzling over the source of a foul odor that had suddenly settled into our hallway. Some thought the Cowboy had urped up some pizza the night before and was not yet conscious enough to clean it up; others believed that someone had let some milk curdle in their room while they were on leave. After a few days, we ruled out the stench's source being any one person's room, since the Dorm Managers would've found it during their weekly room inspections and there was no way such a persistent funk could possibly come from one person.

The most popular theory going at the time was that a rat or some similar creature had recently died in the walls. A call had been placed to Civil Engineering (CE) to locate and remove the deceased rodent, but the animal would've fossilized by the time CE got around to handling the problem. One night, over a few beers, a few of us decided that we would use the upcoming three day weekend to locate the rat's tomb, remove the body and whatever riches lay within, then patch the hole before the Rat's Curse killed us all.

The next evening was my night off and I was returning from the showers when the door to Janke's room cracked open. Most of us didn't even know the room was occupied since no one had been seen entering or leaving it for a couple of months. As I walked past the first two doors in the hallway, my next door neighbor came running up beside me to ask if I wanted to play some ping-pong in the dayroom after I got dressed.

Right as he finished his question, it hit us. We instinctively recoiled as the putrescent assault knocked us a few steps back. My buddy yelled, "Gas! Gas! Gas!" and quickly covered his nose with his shirt as he knelt close to the floor in the vain hope of finding clean air. I only had a towel wrapped around my waist and could only hold my breath, but I allowed the fetid air to enter my mouth while inhaling and could taste death itself on my tongue. Ready to wretch, I abandoned all modesty and pulled the towel to my mouth as I fell to my knees.

A few seconds later, we looked up through watery eyes to see a short, pudgy dude with a crew cut leaving his room. We'd just gotten somewhat used to the smell when he closed the door, blowing another wave of putrid air to destroy our nasal passages. I quickly retreated to the dayroom (re-wrapping myself with the towel as I ran) and opened a window to breathe in the fresh, unadulterated air. As I expelled the last wretched molecules of stank from my lungs, I heard Wolf yell out, "Dude, you are fucking rank!"

Wolf and I spent the next several minutes recovering in the dayroom and contemplating the wall of stench standing between us and our rooms. I really wanted to change into some clothes, and Wolf really wanted to break into a new bottle of Jim Beam.

"That's not humanly possible." Wolf could not believe that a single person could possibly generate the unrelenting wave of reek we'd just endured. "Is he some sort of mutant? Was he cursed by a carnie or something?"

"The stuff they used during chem warfare training wasn't that bad," I observed. "That out there should be listed as a chemical weapon."

"He's a walking war crime," Wolf agreed. We sat in awkward silence for a few moments, I was naked save for a towel and he was in his sweaty workout clothes. We both intently stared at the TV's blank screen until Wolf broke the spell. "Welp, do you wanna risk it?"

We cracked open the dayroom door and took a few quick sniffs to test the air quality. It had returned to the normal background level of mustiness. Relieved, we began the trek down to our rooms when we suddenly hit the Wall of Funk, now stronger than ever, having been freshly reinforced by the undiluted stank within Janke's room. We sprinted through the cloud and made it to our rooms without falling victim to the deadly vapor.

Later that night, a few of us who lived in the hall held a Council of Funk during a particularly contentious game of Risk. I was executing a brilliant Australian Redoubt strategy and preparing to turn in my cards for 20 armies as Wolf and the others discussed ideas to eliminate the funk from our hallway.

Hooch forwarded a radical idea. "We could try talking to the guy and asking him to bathe or something."

The others laughed at his outrageous idea as I placed 20 armies on Siam. Jitney let out a sigh of resignation, as his territories bordered my crimson horde. He knew what was coming. "I've heard about these smelly bastards before," he said, collecting the red dice to defend against my assault. "The only thing they'll respond to is ridicule and shame. We should just bypass the whole politeness bit and head straight for humiliation."

Wolf shook his head. "This isn't the time for half-measures or childish attempts at corrective action. We should jump him and drag his rancid ass to the showers." He looked straight at me. "Remember, we have an alliance. If you attack Kamchatka," he paused and held up three cards, "you will regret it."

"Dammit, Wolf, we're not gonna hurt the guy just cuz he smells bad," Hooch shot back. I notified him of my intention to attack Egypt. He would not receive the continent bonus if I could help it.

Wolf pointed at the door. "A poisonous fume hangs just outside that door! He has declared war on all of us whether you wish to accept it or not. Paul, I'd stop now if I were you."

"How the hell do you keep rolling double sixes?" I exclaimed.

Hooch laughed triumphantly. "The Egyptians are fighting hard to repel the infidel!"

But I would not stop. I could not stop. My horde was destined to sweep across North Africa and into the very heart of South America itself. Wave upon wave crashed upon Egypt's ramparts, but the steadfast Mamelukes held firm as fate continued rolling sixes on their behalf. Soon, my armies were spent. A solitary survivor of the crimson horde

was all that remained of the dozens who only moments ago blazed a trail of conquest through South Asia with unrelenting momentum. Egypt remained inviolate.

I hung my head in shame. I'd left the door wide open all the way to Western Australia and inevitable defeat. Tex, who was the oldest of the group, controlled North America and finally took his turn. "I think talking to Janke might be our best bet, but I don't think anyone can be within 10 feet of him without puking, so we should probably just start by leaving a message on his board."

The rest of us nodded at Tex's sage advice as he placed the bulk of his armies on Alaska. "We should also go in on anything that'll send that funk back from whence it came--those little pine tree things, stick-ups, Lysol, whatever will work." He looked straight at Wolf. "No one touches him. If our hints don't work, we'll take it to the Dorm Managers. Pickup the dice, I'm going for Kamchatka."

Wolf could barely contain his frustration. He rubbed his chin. "You're making a mistake. We all know how this ends."

"Yeah, with me taking all of your cards," Tex replied.

A few minutes later, Wolf was out of the game despite a valiant last stand in Japan. He picked up his beer and headed for the door. "You guys can buy all the air fresheners you want, but I'm dragging that nasty bastard to the showers."

"Goddamn, Wolf, all that guy's done is inconvenience you a little bit," Jitney observed.

"I'd strike the sun if it insulted me!" Wolf bellowed as he opened the door. He covered his nose with one hand and held his other arm above his head as if fending off blows from an unseen assailant while he made his way back to his room.

Three weeks later, our efforts were for naught as the Funk showed no signs of abating. The day after our grand council, we kindly wrote "Take a shower you rank-ass bastard!" on Janke's whiteboard. Hours later, the message was gone but the stench remained. Unable to defeat it at its source, we resolved to repel and contain the funk through the strategic deployment of various air fresheners throughout the Stench Zone. We taped two dozen pine tree car fresheners to his door and adhered several stick-up air fresheners on the walls surrounding his door, but they were no match for the Stench. We even emptied two cans of Lysol into the miasmic cloud, but the cleansing mist only fell uselessly to the floor.

"Gentlemen, we cannot repel funk of that magnitude." Tex admitted. We all nodded in agreement, resigned to the fact that we were powerless against it.

"Then we should use the cleansing power of fire!" Wolf appeared in the hallway, holding up a can of hairspray and a lighter. He had a wild glint in his eye, daring any of us to say a word against him. "Stand back, this cloud may be flammable. Hooch, ready with the fire extinguisher."

Hooch grabbed the fire extinguisher from the wall as Wolf let loose a stream of fire into the hallway. He swept it slowly back and forth, laughing maniacally. It wasn't the quick, hysterical laugh of the truly mad, but a long guttural wail that seemed to be the preamble to a full laugh that never came. "Janke," he taunted. "Come out, Janke. The dragon awaits you!" Janke failed to reveal himself as the dragon's flame sputtered and finally ceased. Wolf tossed the can to the floor and walked back into his room.

Luckily, the Aqua Net's fury had not ignited a conflagration within the hallway, and after a few quick sniffs, we discovered to our dismay that neither had it burned away the vile vapor. We were at a loss, but not yet ready to admit defeat.

"Well, I guess that does it," Tex said. "We have to take this to the dorm managers."

We resisted the idea, since we tried to keep The Man out of internal affairs as much as possible, and we made our displeasure known through exaggerated displays of strength and baring of teeth.

Tex held up his hands, imploring us to calm down. "Yeah, yeah, I know, I know. But we've got no other choice. They're the only ones who can make Janke do anything."

Wolf stepped out of his room wielding an aluminum baseball bat. "We haven't exhausted all of our options yet." He assumed a near-perfect batting stance and nodded to Jitney. "Pull the fire alarm. We'll get him when he runs out."

"Yeah, I don't think that's a good idea," Hooch said. Most people ignored fire alarms and wouldn't leave their rooms until ordered to so by the fire department or until the flames were licking at their feet.

"Exactly, there's no guarantee he'll leave his room," I said.

Hooch looked at me like I just farted, "What? No, I mean beating the bastard senseless with a baseball bat isn't a good idea."

"No shit," Tex said. "Wolf, I told you we're not harming him. That's idiotic. I'll go talk to the dorm managers and they'll take care of it. Trust me, I know these guys, they'll lock this shit down."

The following day, a dejected Tex told us how he informed the dorm managers of the offensive smell and its threat to public safety, and how the dorm managers nodded thoughtfully and said soothing words to him about how sorry they were about the whole ordeal and promised they'd look into it at the first opportunity.

The smell remained. The dorm managers, who led lives of boredom punctuated by brief fits of stupidity committed by the residents, had no interest in fixing the problem. It was an interesting diversion from the game shows and crossword puzzles that dominated the majority of their day. No matter how many complained, our words fell on deaf ears and we were specifically instructed not to take any physical action against Janke or we would find ourselves facing disciplinary action. We

were on our own, defenseless against the most powerful B.O. we had ever encountered or would ever encounter again.

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